



# ICTA

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION  
TECHNOLOGIES AUTHORITY

## Radio Frequency Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety:

A Guide for the public  
and the Local Authorities



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# Radio Frequency Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety:

A Guide for the public and the Local Authorities



## The overall aim of this Guide

The overall aim of this Guide on Electromagnetic Field (EMF) safety in the Radio Frequency (RF) range<sup>1</sup> is to explain in simple terms how a mobile network operates and how exposure to EMF in the RF range is controlled and/or managed and the measures taken by the Information and Communication Technologies Authority (ICTA) in the wake of a number of specific concerns raised on this issue.

As such the Guide will be of interest to three categories of stakeholders: the public, telecommunication operators and Local Authorities.

<sup>1</sup> This Guide uses the terms Electromagnetic Field (EMF) and Radio Frequency (RF) interchangeably.

The main issues for stakeholders are:

- concerns raised over possible adverse health effects associated with radio frequency emissions from base stations
- the potential impact of mobile base stations on communities and their environment
- emissions from mobile telephones and their potential health effects
- possible interference with television reception

In publishing this Guide, the ICTA attempts to provide informative guidance to the public about the technology and the administrative processes involved in the setting up of radiocommunication facilities. This is in line with the ICTA's mandate under the ICT Act 2001 (as amended) to protect and enhance public and consumer interests in the ICT sector. The Guide will serve as information about RF Safety.

**Deployment of Radiocommunication  
Infrastructure Technical and Administrative  
Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety  
(ICTA/STD/2011/01)**

In 2011, the ICTA published, after public consultation, the Deployment of Radiocommunication Infrastructure Technical and Administrative Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety (ICTA/STD/2011/01), hereinafter referred to as the Standard.



The Standard (ICTA/STD/2011/01) is binding on all telecommunication licensees of the Authority and is effective as from 23 September 2011.

The Standard aims to reconcile the requirement of telecommunication licensees to install radiocommunications infrastructure to provide services to the public at specified Quality of Service (QoS) whilst at the same time ensuring EMF safety for the general public in accordance with international standards.

### The Mandate and Role of the ICTA



The ICTA is the national regulator for the ICT sector and Postal Services in Mauritius and was established by an Act of Parliament in 2001. It regulates the ICT sector which has become a major pillar of the economy. The ICTA is also the Controller of Certification Authorities (CCA) which certifies the technologies, infrastructure and practices of all the Certification Authorities licensed to issue Digital Signature Certificates.





The Main Areas of Regulatory Functions of the ICTA under the ICT Act 2001 (as amended) and the Postal Services Act 2002 (as amended) are:

- Telecommunications
- Radiocommunications
- The Internet
- Postal Services (Postal Authority)
- Digital Signatures (Controller of Certification Authorities)

### How does a mobile telephone network operate?

A mobile telephone network is a wireless network distributed over land areas called cells. Each cell has its own **base station** which sends and receives radio signals through its specified area.

Mobile telephones operate by sending and receiving low power RF signals to and from the base stations. The base stations are linked to the rest of the mobile and fixed telephone networks and pass the signal/call onto those networks.

In Mauritius, the frequency bands at which mobile telephones transmit are **900 and 1800 MHz for the GSM** (Global System for Mobile Communication) network, **800 MHz for the CDMA** (Code Division Multiple Access) network and **2100 MHz for the UMTS** (Universal Mobile Telecommunications System) network, which is also known as 3G.

### What is a base station?

A **base station** is the infrastructure which enables telecommunication companies to offer mobile services through a network.

To provide a good quality mobile service, base stations need to be located where people use their mobile telephones. The number of base stations required for a given area will depend on the terrain and other surrounding obstructions like trees and buildings and the number of people using mobile telephones in that area.

Antennas of base stations are often located on existing structures and on the roof tops of buildings to minimise the visual impact of the facility and to use the available height to achieve coverage objectives and to minimise mobile telephone coverage 'black spots'.


Base stations produce very weak radiofrequency (RF) electromagnetic field (EMF) exposure levels.



### What are radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMF/RF)?

Radiofrequency electromagnetic fields (EMF) transfer electromagnetic energy by radio waves. EMF is part of everyday life and occurs naturally (emissions from the sun, the earth and the ionosphere) or artificially. Artificial sources include:-

- Mobile telephone base stations
- Broadcast towers
- Electrical and electronic equipment
- Remote controls



Radiofrequency (EMF) is a non-ionising radiation, which means that it has insufficient energy to break the chemical bonds in an atom or molecule. In contrast, ionising radiation, such as X-rays, can strip electrons from atoms and molecules, thereby changing the molecular structure that can lead to damage in biological tissue. Given that each type of ionisation interacts differently with the human body, care must be taken so as not to confuse the terms 'ionising' and 'non-ionising' radiation.

### What are authorised RF field levels?

International health and safety guidelines are in place to limit public exposure to radio waves from base stations and mobile telephones. The **World Health Organisation (WHO)** has formally recognised the **International Commission on Non-Ionising Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)** to develop the international EMF exposure guidelines. The international guidelines developed by ICNIRP are based on a careful analysis of published scientific literature (which covers research on both thermal and non-thermal effects) and offer protection against all identified hazards of RF energy with large safety margins.

The table below gives examples of reference levels for specified technologies used for deploying mobile networks. These are derived from the ICNIRP basic limits of exposure of human beings to electromagnetic fields for comparison against measured electromagnetic fields. Measurements below the reference level guarantee that the basic limits of exposure are not exceeded. These reference levels have been adopted by the ICTA pursuant to section 18(1) (n) of the ICT Act 2001 (as amended) and in accordance with ITU-T<sup>2</sup> Recommendation K.52.

<sup>2</sup> The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) is the United Nations specialized agency for information and communication technologies. One of the three sectors of the ITU is the ITU Telecommunication Standardization Sector (ITU-T).



Technology	Reference Levels (V/m) based on ICNIRP limits for General Public
GSM 900	$\approx 42$ V/m
GSM 1800	$\approx 59$ V/m
UMTS	61 V/m
CDMA 2000	$\approx 40$ V/m

### Are mobile telephone base stations a health risk?

According to the World Health Organisation (WHO):

- Biological effects are measurable responses to a stimulus or to a change in the environment. These changes are not necessarily harmful to health.
- Ongoing change forms a normal part of our lives.
- Changes that are irreversible and stress the organism for long periods of time may constitute a health hazard.
- An adverse health effect causes detectable impairment of the health of the exposed individual or of his or her offspring.
- A biological effect on the other hand, may or may not result in an adverse health effect.

*Based on the weight of international scientific opinion, the WHO has concluded that there is no substantiated evidence that living near a mobile telephone antenna causes adverse health effects.*

## The authorization process for mobile base station sites

The authorization process for the setting up of a mobile base station involves a number of authorities. The ICTA is one of them. The other authorities include the Ministry of Housing and Lands, the Ministry of Environment and Sustainable Development, the Local Authorities and the Department of Civil Aviation.

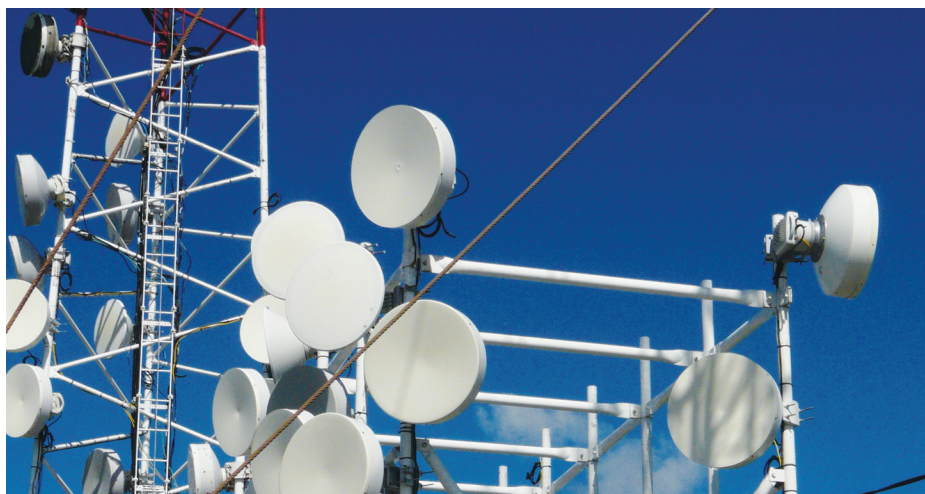
The ICTA licenses the services provided by the operator and authorises the installation and operation of the telecommunication/radiocommunication equipment including the radiating elements (i.e. antennas) subject to compliance with the Deployment of Radiocommunication Infrastructure Technical and Administrative Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety (ICTA/STD/2011/01).



## What is the Deployment of Radiocommunication Infrastructure

### Technical and Administrative Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety?

The Standard makes it imperative for operators to adopt forward planning for the installation of RF infrastructure to cater for the expected rise in the number of antennas due to the foreseeable growth in demand for mobile telephony services and good network coverage in Mauritius.



#### The objectives of this Standard are:

- a) to apply a Precautionary Approach to the deployment of radiocommunications infrastructure
- b) to provide best practice processes for demonstrating compliance with relevant exposure limits and the protection of the public
- c) to ensure relevant stakeholders are informed and consulted before radiocommunications infrastructure is constructed

- d) to specify standards for consultation, information availability and presentation
- e) to consider the impact on the well-being of the community, physical or otherwise, of radio communications infrastructure and
- f) to ensure that the views of Local Authorities and the community are considered and incorporated, if needs be, into the radiocommunications infrastructure site selection.

*A copy of the Standard may be downloaded from <http://www.icta.mu>*

### Are emissions from mobile telephone base stations monitored?

In 2009, the ICTA adopted an **in-situ measurement protocol** for the determination of RF fields (300 MHz – 6GHz) in the vicinity of base stations for the evaluation of general public exposure to electromagnetic fields.

The ICTA performs measurements as per the abovementioned protocol upon request from Local Authorities or the general public.

The ICTA has initiated a project whereby regular monitoring of the emissions from mobile telephone base stations will be effected around the island. The measured levels will then be made publicly available on the website of the ICTA.

### Mobile telephone technology

Mobile telephones are low power devices that transmit and receive radio frequency (RF) signals from mobile telephone base stations.

Persons using mobile telephones travel in a mobile network from one cell to another and the mobile base station for the first cell passes the call to the base station of the other cell so that the call continues uninterrupted.



In order to minimise interference between cells and conserve battery life, a mobile telephone is capable of limiting its transmitted power to the minimum. Hence if a mobile telephone is close to the base station, its transmitted power is reduced, whereas if a mobile telephone is far from the base station, its transmitted power is increased.

### Are mobile telephones safe?

According to a WHO Fact Sheet N° 193 of June 2011 studies have been conducted over the last two decades to assess whether mobile telephones pose a potential health risk. According to the information in the WHO Fact Sheet to date, no adverse health effects have been established for mobile telephone use. The Fact Sheet also mentions that the WHO intends to conduct a formal risk assessment of all studied health outcomes from radiofrequency fields exposure by 2012.

(<http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs193/en/index.html>)

On 31 May 2011, however, according to press release N°208 of the International Agency for Research on Cancer (IARC), the WHO and the IARC classified radiofrequency electromagnetic fields *“as possibly carcinogenic to humans (Group 2B) based on an increased risk for glioma, a malignant type of brain cancer, associated with wireless telephone use”*.



For more information on this subject please consult the [www.who.int](http://www.who.int) and [www.iarc.fr](http://www.iarc.fr)

## Are emissions from mobile telephones regulated?

Emissions from mobile telephones in Mauritius have been limited to a Specific Absorption Rate (SAR) of 2 W/kg of tissue (averaged over 10 grams) in compliance with the EN 50360:2001 standard. The SAR is defined as the rate at which a mobile telephone user absorbs energy from the handset.

As from 1 February 2010, all mobile telephones imported in Mauritius for sale should have been type approved by the ICTA and should have shown compatibility with the EN 50360:2001 standard. A list of type approved mobile telephones, including their respective SAR information is available from the ICTA website (<http://www.icta.mu>). Moreover, as from 1 July 2010, licensed dealers have the obligation to affix the maximum SAR on the box of mobile telephones sold and in the user's manual of the mobile telephone or on a separate sheet in the mobile telephone box.

### Maximum results found during SAR evaluation Standards: EN 50360:2001 & EN 62209-1:2006 Uncontrolled Exposure / General Population

Model	: ABC
Exposure Limit	: 2.0 W/Kg (mW/g) averaged over 10 gram
Head Configuration	: 0.908
Body Worn Configuration	: 0.599
<b>Genuine Mobile Handset</b>	

*Above is an example of how it may appear.*





### What can be done to minimise RF field exposure from mobile telephones?

The WHO's advice as given in Fact Sheet N°193 of May 2010 is as follows:-

*"A person using a mobile telephone 30–40 cm away from their body – for example when text messaging, accessing the Internet, or using a "hands free" device – will therefore have a much lower exposure to radiofrequency fields than someone holding the handset against their head.*

*In addition to using "hands-free" devices, which keep mobile telephones away from the head and body during telephone calls, exposure is also reduced by limiting the number and length of calls. Using the telephone in areas of good reception also decreases exposure as it allows the telephone to transmit at reduced power. The use of commercial devices for reducing radiofrequency field exposure has not been shown to be effective."*

## What is the ICTA doing to ensure EMF safety?

Under section 18 (1) (n) of the ICT Act 2001 (as amended), the ICTA has the legal mandate to “ensure the safety and quality of every information and communication services including telecommunication service and, for that purpose, determine technical standards for telecommunication network, the connection of customer equipment to telecommunication networks”.

Since 2009, the ICTA has been committed to setting up the appropriate regulatory framework with a view to ensuring EMF safety. Below are some of the actions taken by the ICTA as part of this endeavour:

1. The ICTA informs the community about EMF safety.  
This Guide is an example of a communication tool used by the regulator
2. The ICTA has issued the mandatory technical and administrative Standard (ICTA/STD/2011/01) for operators with respect to the deployment of radiocommunications infrastructure
3. The ICTA evaluates base stations prior to authorising their deployment in accordance with the International Telecommunication Union Standardization Bureau (ITU-T) Recommendation K.52
4. Through its **type approval process**, the ICTA ensures that mobile telephones commercialised in Mauritius comply with internationally recognised health and safety standards for electromagnetic fields
5. The ICTA has been conducting in-situ measurements upon request since 2009 and has embarked on a project whereby EMF levels across Mauritius will be monitored regularly and published on the ICTA website
6. The ICTA also entertains complaints from the public with respect to EMF safety.





**What actions can be initiated where a site which has been notified in accordance with clause 6.3 of the Standard after the 23 September 2011 does not comply with the Standard?**

Whenever there are good reasons to believe that there is non-compliance, the first step is to file a written complaint to the operator of the site. For the purpose of the Standard, a complaint is deemed to be an expression of dissatisfaction or grievance made in writing. A complainant may send the complaint by email, post or fax. Operators are required to assist the complainant in making the complaint, if needs be.

Where a complainant is not satisfied with the operator's response, he/she may report the matter to the ICTA. The ICTA may look into the complaint and may direct the operator to take remedial actions, if any.

When making a complaint, the material facts committed by the operator should be set out as clearly as possible with reference to the relevant sections of the Deployment of Radiocommunication Infrastructure Technical and Administrative Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety which the complainant has good reasons to believe may have been breached.

## What can a complainant do if he/she wishes the ICTA to effect EMF measurements at his/her premises?

Should a complainant wish the ICTA to effect EMF measurements at his/her premises with respect to base stations located in his/her neighbourhood, a written request shall be made to the ICTA.

The ICTA will ensure that the said base stations are in their normal operating conditions and arrange for the most appropriate time to effect the measurements prior to giving the complainant at least 48 hours advance notice.

On the day of the measurements, the complainant will have to be at home or make arrangements to be duly represented as the measurements will usually be effected inside the complainant's premises in the rooms facing the base stations. Officers of the ICTA will call at the complainant's premises and will briefly explain to the complainant or to his/her representative, the process they will follow. They will also request the complainant or his/her representative to sign an inspection declaration form.

The ICTA will inform the complainant of its findings by way of letter at its earliest convenience.



### Recommendations of the ICTA to avoid potential interference of mobile telephone base stations with television reception

Interference which is characterized visually on the television screen by herringbone patterning or “SS” displays which may be accompanied by unwanted audio noise in the received sound has in some cases been allegedly associated with nearby base stations operated by mobile operators.

The investigations of the above interference by the ICTA have revealed that the interference problem is associated mainly with the use of wideband TV receiving antennas.

These antennas are inherently capable of receiving signals other than the intended television channels only, including the signals from nearby base stations. The amplifiers (boosters), found within the wideband TV receiving antenna systems are overloaded by signals which the antennas ought to have rejected, resulting into image and sound degradation. The ICTA draws the attention of the public on the importance of choosing the right TV receiving aerial, especially with the increasing number of wireless systems operated throughout the island.

The ICTA highly recommends that TV owners seek expert advice prior to choosing a TV receiving aerial so as to avoid risks of television reception interference. The ICTA for its part will constantly make sure that, telecommunication operators and other frequency spectrum users operate their systems according to established norms.



## Glossary

To help Mauritian consumers make an informed choice, a glossary of commonly used terms when referring to RF Safety is included in this Guide. An effort has been made to maintain the legal meaning of these words where they have been legally defined; where they have not, their definitions refer to the meaning ascribed to them in the ICT sector in the local context.

### “2G”

is the general term used by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to describe the existing digital 2<sup>nd</sup> generation of mobile technology that supports voice and basic data services.

### “3G”

is the general term used by the International Telecommunication Union (ITU) to describe the 3<sup>rd</sup> generation of mobile technology that supports advanced data services.

### Base Station

means a radiocommunications transmitter and its associated infrastructure including any antennas, housings and other equipment.

### Building and Land Use Permit

has the same meaning as in the Local Government Act 2003 (as amended), the Building Act 1915 (as amended) and the Town and Country Planning Act 1954 (as amended).

### Co-located Facility

means one or more facilities installed on or within:

- (a) an original facility; or
- (b) a public utility structure.



## Consultation

means a process whereby licensees seek to inform other parties about a proposed project at particular premises with the intention of giving those parties an opportunity to respond to the proposal and to have their responses considered.

## EMF

in this Guide refers to the radio frequency (RF) portion of the electromagnetic spectrum.

## Installation

in relation to radiocommunications infrastructure, includes:

- a) the construction of the radiocommunications infrastructure, on, over or under any land, for example base stations located on the ground
- b) the attachment of the radiocommunications infrastructure to any building or other structure for example roof-top base stations; and
- c) any activity that is ancillary or incidental to the installation of the radiocommunications infrastructure (*for this purpose, installation includes an activity covered by paragraphs (a) or (b) above*).

## Interested and Affected Parties

include primarily, persons who reside within the immediate vicinity of the facility and who have a direct interest, economic, physical or social in the proposed facility.

## Local Authority

has the same meaning as in the Local Government Act 2003.

## Low RF Power Infrastructure

means one or more transmitters operating at a total maximum power into the antenna of no greater than 2 Watts.

*NOTE: Examples should include micro-cells and pico-cells.*



### **Point-to-point Service**

means a carriage service which allows a person to transmit a communication to an end-user(s), from one geographical point to another.

### **Precautionary Approach**

means the precautionary approach referred in Appendix A of the ICTA Deployment of Radiocommunications Infrastructure Technical and Administrative Standard for Electromagnetic Field (EMF) Safety. *(For ease of reference, Appendix A is included in the next section of this Guide).*

### **Public Land Mobile Network Service**

has the same meaning as in the PLMN Licence document and generally means the mobile telephony network.

### **RF Hazard Area**

means an area where the emission level exceeds the reference levels adopted by the ICTA for general public exposure to RF/EMF.

### **Radiocommunications Infrastructure**

means a base station used for communications.

### **RF**

means radio frequency.

## APPENDIX A

### THE PRECAUTIONARY PRINCIPLE

Terms used in the context of risk assessment are the Precautionary Principle, the Precautionary Approach, Prudent Avoidance and ALARA (As Low As Reasonably Achievable).

For the purpose of this document the Precautionary Principle may be seen as the fundamental precepts upon which a practical precautionary approach could be based.

The issue of risk assessment can be summarised as the weighing up of likely harm based on all available scientific evidence, with the cost of commercial adjustment by the Licensee.

The fundamental concept of the Precautionary Principle was summed up in 1992 at the UN Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) in Rio de Janeiro.


Here, the Precautionary Principle was explicitly recognised and included in the Rio Declaration. It is listed as Principle 15 among the principle of general rights and obligations of national authorities.

"In order to protect the environment, the precautionary approach should be widely applied by States according to their capabilities. Where there are threats of serious or irreversible damage, lack of full scientific certainty shall not be used as a reason for postponing cost-effective measures to prevent environmental degradation."

The application of the Precautionary Principle requires commitment to the idea that scientific proof of a causal link between human activities and its effect is not required.

The application of the Precautionary Principle to the siting of radiocommunications infrastructure should include a consideration of the uncertainty of the science on a-thermal effects.

There is a need to balance the requirement for the telecommunications industry to provide adequate service with the need of the community to be ensured of living in an environment that will not be a potential threat to health.



The World Health Organisation's advice on electromagnetic fields and public health with respect to mobile telephones and their base stations (Fact Sheet No. 193 of June 2000) includes the following precautionary measures.

### Precautionary measures

- **Government:** *If regulatory authorities have adopted health-based guidelines but, because of public concerns, would like to introduce additional precautionary measures to reduce exposure to RF fields, they should not undermine the science base of the guidelines by incorporating arbitrary additional safety factors into the exposure limits. Precautionary measures should be introduced as a separate policy that encourages, through voluntary means, the reduction of RF fields by equipment manufacturers and the public. Details of such measures are given in a separate WHO Background document.*
- **Individuals:** *Present scientific information does not indicate the need for any special precautions for use of mobile phones. If individuals are concerned, they might choose to limit their own or their children's RF exposure by limiting the length of calls, or using "hands-free" devices to keep mobile phones away from the head and body.*

## APPENDIX B

### International Organisations

#### The International Commission on Non-Ionizing Radiation Protection (ICNIRP)

The ICNIRP is a body of independent scientific experts who provide information and advice on the potential health hazards of exposure to non-ionizing radiation such as optical radiation [infrared, lasers, ultraviolet], static and time-varying electric and magnetic fields and radiofrequency radiation and ultrasound.

All the information collated is published in the form of scientific reviews and reports and the results of these combined with the risk assessments are carried out in collaboration with the World Health Organisation. The ICNIRP has published an Exposure guideline in relation to the subject. Exposure guidelines on Radio Frequency and Electromagnetic Field may be viewed on the following link:

<http://www.icnirp.de/PubEMF.htm>

#### World Health Organisation (WHO)

The World Health Organisation has also conducted intensive research to determine any possible health effects of the exposure of frequency spectrum. So far research results and data collected have shown very low exposure levels and no convincing scientific evidence that the relatively weak Radio Frequency signals from the base stations and wireless networks cause adverse health effects.

[\[http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs304/en/\]](http://www.who.int/mediacentre/factsheets/fs304/en/)



## The International Telecommunication Union (ITU)

The ITU is the United Nations specialized agency for Information and Communication Technology. It has several units catering for specific radiocommunications and telecommunications issues and one of them is the ITU-T Study 5 group. The ITU-T looks particularly at Environment and Climate Change and is responsible for studies on methodologies for evaluating the ICT effects on climate change and publishing guidelines for using ICTs in an eco-friendly way. In addition to its climate focused activities, the Study Group 5 of the ITU has four main objectives. Firstly it has to protect telecommunication equipment and installations against damage and malfunction due to electromagnetic disturbances, such as those from lightning. The second is to ensure safety of personnel and users of networks against current and voltages used in telecommunication networks. The third is to avoid health risks from electromagnetic fields (EMF) produced by telecommunication devices and installations and fourth is to guarantee a good quality of service (QoS) for high speed data services by providing requirements on characteristics of copper cables and on the coexistence of services delivered by different providers.

[<http://www.itu.int/net/ITU-T/info/sg05.aspx>]



## APPENDIX C

### The Current Consumer Complaints Mechanism of the ICTA :

- The ICTA has a Consumer Complaints Mechanism:  
([http://www.icta.mu/consumer/complaints\\_mech.html](http://www.icta.mu/consumer/complaints_mech.html))

### How to Make a Complaint under this Mechanism

- Complaints must be made in writing.
- Give your full particulars i.e. name, address and contact details (telephone number and e-mail address where available). Anonymous complaints are not entertained by the Authority.
- Address the complaint to the Executive Director, ICT Authority, Level 12, Celicourt, Celicourt Antelme St, Port Louis.
- Envelopes should be clearly marked with the ICTA address and that of the complainant's on the reverse side.
  - *Complaints can also be emailed to [icta@intnet.mu](mailto:icta@intnet.mu)*
  - *Attach photocopies of relevant documents, e.g letters sent to other authorities.*
  - *Retain your original documents.*
  - *Complaints may be submitted in Mauritian Kreol if necessary.*
  - *If complaints are handwritten make sure the handwriting is legible.*
- A complaint form is available on the website for all complaints.
- A specific form is available for Radio Frequency Interference complaints.
- Hard copies of both these forms can be picked up from the Customer Support Desk of the Authority or at the Reception Desk on the 12<sup>th</sup> Floor.
- Do bear in mind that the Authority will respond to your complaint promptly but the outcome will also depend on the category of complaint.

### Some further practical advice:

- You may also call or visit the **Customer Support Desk** where you can obtain guidance about making a complaint.

The ICTA will examine the complaint and if necessary refer it to the appropriate authority for example, the local authority.

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# ICTA

INFORMATION & COMMUNICATION  
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